

# Early Years Free Entitlement

## What is the early years 'free entitlement'?

Every child aged three and four is eligible to access free early education and childcare. This is known as the Early Years 'free entitlement'. The free places are only available in settings that are registered by Ofsted and included in Children's Service's list of eligible providers. The Government and Bolton Council are committed to providing high quality early education for 3 and 4 year old children.

There are various places a child can attend to access their 'free entitlement'. These are often called 'settings' or 'childcare providers' and include:

- **Playgroups/ Preschools**
- **Private day nurseries**
- **Local Education Authority (LEA) nursery classes or nursery schools**
- **Independent schools**
- **Childminders who are accredited to provide free entitlement as part of a registered childminder network**

## What will my child learn in an early education and childcare setting?

Early education and childcare covers the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for children age 3 to 5 from the beginning of nursery or pre-school to the end of the reception class in primary school. The EYFS curriculum provides a range of activities in the following areas of learning:

- Personal, social and emotional development
- Communication, language and literacy
- Mathematical development
- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- Physical development
- Creative development

## How do I apply for my child's early years 'free entitlement'?

You can contact any school or childcare provider that has been approved and is included in Children's Services list of eligible providers and ask about vacancies. Details of these settings in Bolton are available from Bolton Families Information Service (01204 332170).

## Will I have to pay anything?

The funding is currently used to pay for up to 15 hours of early education and childcare per week usually during term time (38 weeks per year). Some providers may be able to offer more flexibility e.g. fewer hours per week over more weeks. This arrangement is known as the 'free entitlement'. Providers cannot charge you for this time but any additional time or services that your child receives may be charged for. However, parents should not be required or expected to take up additional services in order to access a free place. The provider should tell you about any additional charges prior to you taking up the place to enable you to make a decision about which setting you wish your child to attend.

## When is my child eligible to benefit from the 'free entitlement'?

Your child will be eligible for a free entitlement place from the beginning of the term after the child becomes three. The dates are set nationally and are shown in the following table:

## Early Years Free Entitlement

If Child's 3 <sup>rd</sup> birthday falls between	Child becomes eligible for the 'free entitlement'
1 <sup>st</sup> September – 31 <sup>st</sup> December	<b>Spring Term</b> In January after their third birthday
1 <sup>st</sup> January – 31 <sup>st</sup> March	<b>Summer Term</b> In April after their third birthday
1 <sup>st</sup> April – 31 <sup>st</sup> August	<b>Autumn Term</b> In September after their third birthday

To benefit from the 'free entitlement' it is **essential** that the child is registered with your chosen setting by a specific date known as the headcount date.

### **My child attends a setting two full days per week. Will they still receive the full 15 hours per week?**

**Yes.** From September 2012 the 15 hours can be taken over a minimum of two days between 7am and 7pm.

If a child only attends for 1 day the maximum free entitlement would be 10 hours per week.

### **Does my child have to attend for a minimum number of hours per session?**

**Yes.** The minimum number of free entitlement hours per day is 2.5 and the maximum number of free entitlement hours per day is 10.

### **Can my child attend more than one setting?**

**Yes.** If a child attends more than one setting then the funding will be shared proportionately between the settings.

### **Do I have a right to early years 'free entitlement' with a particular provider?**

**No,** you only have the right to early years free entitlement for your child.

### **What kind of setting will be right for my child?**

You will need to consider what is right for your child within your family situation. You and your child may wish to look at a number of settings before you make a decision. Bolton Families Information Service has a factsheet on choosing quality childcare in Bolton which may help you. You will need to contact settings directly to check the availability of places.

If you have any other queries or require a list of Early Education providers or childcare settings in Bolton, please contact:-

**Bolton Families Information Service**  
One Stop Shop, Town Hall, Bolton, BL1 1RU

**Tel:** 01204 332170

**Email:** [families@bolton.gov.uk](mailto:families@bolton.gov.uk)